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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4131
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RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA IMMEDIATE 0032
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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 9446
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA IMMEDIATE 0833
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 0410
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE 0815
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA IMMEDIATE 0078
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0442
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 JAKARTA 006026

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KNPP](#) [KISL](#) [IR](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: INDONESIA/IRAN: AHMADI-NEJAD A DIFFICULT GUEST

REF: A. STATE 75849

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 5886

[1](#)C. JAKARTA 5779

[1](#)D. JAKARTA 5705

Classified By: Ambassador B. Lynn Pascoe. Reasons 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C/NF) Summary: On May 11 the Ambassador conveyed to Dino Patti Djalal, National Security Advisor to Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, our objections to the GOI's initiative to create a new U.N. grouping to address Iran's nuclear program. Djalal took our points on board, but it is clear that the GOI still harbors aspirations to play a role on the issue. Djalal also confided that Yudhoyono had been taken aback by President Ahmadi-Nejad's belligerent bluster, hard-line ideology, and disrespectful behavior toward his Indonesian hosts during his state visit to Jakarta. Yudhoyono now expects the Iranian President will try to use the upcoming D-8 Summit in Bali as a platform for drumming up support for his nuclear program, and is belatedly worried that his own -- and Indonesia's -- international reputation will suffer by association with Ahmadi-Nejad. On May 11 and 12, Ahmadi-Nejad was received warmly by Indonesian student and Muslim groups. During his meetings and public events he described Israel as a "cancer" and a "tyrannical" regime and repeated his assertion that Islam would supplant liberal democracy as the world's dominant ideology, calling on all Muslims to reject liberal democracy and the West. It will be some weeks before the costs to Yudhoyono of the Ahmadi-Nejad visit -- both domestically and internationally -- become fully evident. End summary.

U.S. Rejects Indonesian Initiative

[1](#)2. (C/NF) Ambassador met with Dino Patti Djalal, President Yudhoyono's spokesman and national security advisor, on the evening of May 11 to deliver our response to the Indonesians' call for a new negotiating forum to address the Iranian nuclear program (ref A). Djalal took our points on board but asked whether Ambassador believed that was our "final" position. Ambassador replied that it was. Djalal explained that by including Algeria and South Africa in the proposed forum, the GOI had hoped to make the initiative acceptable to Iran. The Iranians, Djalal added, had suggested including Cuba.

¶3. (C/NF) In this and subsequent conversations, an increasingly appalled Djalal provided running updates on Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad's ongoing State visit to Indonesia (refs B - D). While Ahmadi-Nejad has been received very warmly by student and Muslim groups, his aggressive rhetoric and breaches of protocol have alarmed and embarrassed President Yudhoyono.

¶4. (C/NF) Djalal reported that Yudhoyono had started his two-hour May 10 meeting with Ahmadi-Nejad with a one hour tete-a-tete. Yudhoyono urged Ahmadi-Nejad to cool his rhetoric on the nuclear issue, and said that during his recent trip to the Middle East he had heard concerns about the Iranian nuclear program from all his hosts. Yudhoyono also stressed that it was important that Iran unilaterally suspend its uranium enrichment activities, according to Djalal. Ahmadi-Nejad replied that this was out of the question; Iran had already done this once, and would not be induced to do so again. He told Yudhoyono that Iran was prepared for "any emergency," which the Indonesians took to refer to preparations for a response to any military action against Iran.

¶5. (C/NF) In the course of their discussion, Ahmadi-Nejad told Yudhoyono that liberalism is "the enemy" and was "holding Iran back from greatness." Djalal, clearly in a grim frame of mind after the day's events, told the Ambassador that the Indonesians were taken aback by these and other remarks. The GOI, Djalal said, had supposed that Ahmadi-Nejad might be more polite and "pragmatic" in private,

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since he was an elected leader and a politician. There was no give-and-take in the discussions. Yudhoyono had concluded that Ahmadi-Nejad thrives in his fight against the West, and that "the more pressure he gets, the more he likes it."

¶6. (C/NF) Djalal went on to say that Yudhoyono was in "bad mood" and believed that Ahmadi-Nejad had abused Indonesian hospitality by his verbal attacks on Israel and strident acts while on Indonesian soil. It is one thing to make these comments for domestic audiences in Iran, Djalal said, but it is disrespectful to the host to do so while on a State visit. (During his visit, Ahmadi-Nejad has publicly described Israel as a "cancer" and a "tyrannical" regime "based on threats" that would one day "vanish.") Yudhoyono now fears that association with these tirades have may have damaged Indonesia's international reputation.

¶7. (C/NF) Djalal said that the GOI now realizes that Ahmadi-Nejad will seek to use the D-8 Summit, which begins May 12 in Bali, as a platform to seek support for its position on the nuclear issue. The GOI is especially concerned about Ahmadi-Nejad's likely behavior during an informal "retreat" event during the summit. The GOI, Djalal said, would do everything it could to keep the nuclear issue off the table.

¶8. (C/NF) The Turkish Ambassador to Indonesia called from Bali to ask for the Ambassador's help in keeping the Iranians from taking over the D-8 Secretary General position from the Turkish incumbent, who is stepping down. He said Indonesian Foreign Ministry personnel in Bali were not being helpful on this and suggested the Indonesians should insist on occupying the position given that they are the upcoming chair. The Ambassador again called Djalal, who was with the President, to encourage Indonesian action on this issue.

Ahmadi-Nejad Rude And Crude, But . . .

¶9. (SBU) In the meantime, Ahmadi-Nejad's crass behavior during his Jakarta program has offended his Indonesian hosts'

strong sense of decorum and protocol. At a joint press conference with President Yudhoyono on May 10, Ahmadi-Nejad behaved as if his host were not present. In response to the first question asked by a journalist, Ahmadi-Nejad gave a half-hour harangue on the nuclear issue. Local media noted that President Yudhoyono, and Djalal who MC'ed the press conference became visibly annoyed as the Iranian droned on. On Thursday, May 11, leaders of Indonesia's Parliament were angered when Ahmadi-Nejad, citing questionable security reasons, canceled a meeting at the last minute and proposed to hold the meeting in the hotel where he was staying - located only 200 meters from the Parliament building. (The meeting was later rescheduled for May 12.) Ahmadi-Nejad garnered more bad press when he kept a group of editors waiting for over two hours to hold an "afternoon tea" roundtable interview.

. . . A Big Man On Campus

¶10. (SBU) Other events went better, from Ahmadi-Nejad's perspective. Speaking before an enthusiastic group of students at the University of Indonesia in Depok, the Iranian President once again defended his country's nuclear program and attacked Israel. The audience reportedly booed each time the West, the U.S., or Israel was mentioned. Some carried banners reading, "Iran In Our Hearts" and "Nuclear Power For Peace." Ahmadi-Nejad generated loud applause when, responding to a question he found to his liking, he spontaneously offered a student a scholarship to study in Iran.

¶11. (C/NF) Ahmadi-Nejad's May 11 at the State Islamic University was, if anything, even more enthusiastic. A contact told us that students filled the university's 1,500 seat auditorium to capacity in order hear Ahmadi-Nejad's speech, while several hundred more listened to the speech outside through speakers. He contrasted the exceedingly warm and enthusiastic reception, punctuated with regular bursts of

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sustained applause for Ahmadi-Nejad and booing at the mention of the U.S., with the correct hearing and pointed questions received by Undersecretary Karen Hughes in her October 2005 visit to the same venue. He said the main issues that came up in Ahmadi-Nejad's speech and lengthy Q-and-A session were Iran's nuclear program, which student questioners praised effusively, an alleged American double standard toward Iranian and Israeli nuclear programs, and claims of USG hostility and aggression toward Muslims. The contact quoted the Iranian leader as telling the cheering and whooping students, "we are talking about nuclear energy but we should be talking about you - you are the nuclear energy of the future."

Warm Welcome From Muslim Groups

¶12. (SBU) On May 12, Ahmadi-Nejad began the day with a courtesy call on a small group of leaders of Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's second-largest Islamic organization. A group insider told us the meeting had been all but imposed on Muhammadiyah the previous day by the GOI Minister of Research and Technology, and that Muhammadiyah Chairman Din Syamsuddin did not bother to change a previously-scheduled Thursday travel departure in order to personally host the Iranian. After the low-key 40-minute event (the Iranians reportedly did not want a press conference), an Indonesian attendee told us Ahmadi-Nejad spoke almost exclusively on the importance of Muslim brotherhood and unity in order to confront the forces of Western liberal democracy. The Iranian leader stated that liberal democracy was falling apart, as evidenced by its cruel and hypocritical treatment of Palestinians and its alliance with Israel, and predicted it would follow Marxism as a failed ideology. He proclaimed that Islam would supplant liberal democracy as the world's dominant ideology

and called on all Muslims to reject liberal democracy and the West in order to make this a reality. Iran's nuclear program was not discussed. Apart from identifying America as the West's leading proponent of liberal democracy and criticizing its treatment of Palestinians, Ahmadi-Nejad reportedly made no other reference to the U.S.

¶13. (C/NF) In contrast to Muhammadiyah's second-tier reception of the Iranian leader, rival Islamic group Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) laid on red-carpet treatment for Ahmadi-Nejad. NU Chairman Hasyim Muzadi, who had recently visited Tehran as an Iranian government guest, hosted a gathering of religious and political leaders at NU headquarters. Although Muzadi had reportedly invited a veritable who's-who of public figures to attend the event, an NU participant told us that only a few political heavyweights such as former Speaker of Parliament Akbar Tanjung, current MPR Chair Hidayat Nur Wahid, and a number of parliamentarians joined NU officials and clerics for the event. Representatives of the hard-line Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's Islamic Mujahidin Council (MMI) were also reportedly in attendance, along with officials of other small Islamic organizations. The NU participant told us Ahmadi-Nejad spoke at length in defense of Iran's nuclear program, asking rhetorically why Iran's "peaceful program for energy and economic development" is challenged by the only country on earth to have ever used nuclear weapons to murder innocent people. Ahmadi-Nejad also reportedly encouraged Indonesian Muslim youth, particularly girls, to focus on study of science and technology in order to counter Western domination. The Iranian leader later performed congregational Friday noon prayers with various Muslim leaders at the National Mosque and gave a short speech at the end of the prayer.

Comment

¶14. (C/NF) Indonesia still has a need to believe it has a role in resolving the Iranian nuclear issue; this may well be related to its ambitions for a seat on the UN Security Council. Its real room for maneuver, however, is limited by the lack of sophistication of the Indonesian body politic on the issue. Most Indonesians appear to view Ahmadi-Nejad's visit in simplistic terms: the West believes it can do

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whatever it likes in the nuclear field, but it wants to prevent Iran from engaging in nuclear research; Iran has stood up to America, which has been bullying Muslim countries ever since the September 11, 2001 attacks. In this simplistic outlook, Indonesia, by offering Ahmadi-Nejad a warm reception, is siding with an Islamic brother nation and remaining true to its Non-Aligned Movement heritage.

¶15. (C/NF) For others, Ahmadi-Nejad demonstrated an independence from the U.S. and other foreign power that they believe Indonesia should emulate. This seemed particularly evident in the student gatherings. But it also has resonated in older nationalistic circles; former Indonesian Army Chief of Staff General Ryamizard Ryacudu -- always quick to seek foreign conspiracies as the reason for Indonesia's problems -- told the press "We should have the courage to confront foreign intervention like Iran does in confronting the U.S."

¶16. (C/NF) It will be some weeks before the costs of the Ahmadi-Nejad visit -- both in terms of Indonesia's international reputation for "moderation" and the extent to which it bolstered Yudhoyono's internal critics -- become fully evident. There can be no doubt, however, the Iranians have succeeded in circumscribing the Indonesian room for maneuver on the nuclear issue. End comment.

PASCOE